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OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BARTON

CHAIRMAN

OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

APRIL 10, 1997

Today, we begin the first of a series of hearings on the Environmental Protection Agency's proposal to revise the ozone and particulate matter National Ambient Air Quality Standards or NAAQS. Last Congress, the Honorable Chairman of the Health and Environment Subcommittee, my good friend Mike Bilirakis and I began this process with a joint hearing on the ozone NAAQS. I am happy to be able to work with him again on this most important issue.

In November of 1996, the Administrator proposed revising both the ozone and particulate matter NAAQS. As many of you know, the Clean Air Act requires that the National Ambient Air Quality Standards be reviewed every five years. In conducting this review, the Clean Air Act states that the NAAQS should be set at a level that protects human health, with an adequate margin of safety. Costs cannot be considered in setting the NAAQS, according to a court decision and EPA policy. It is important to understand that the Clean Air Act does not require EPA to revise the NAAQS, but only to review it and to determine whether revising it is necessary to protect human health.

Therefore, the key to assessing whether the standard should be revised is whether the science dictates that a different standard or level is necessary to protect human health. If the science does not support revising the standards, then we need go no further.

In order to assist EPA in assessing this scientific evidence, the Clean Air Act

sets up an independent review committee, known as the Clean Air Science Advisory Committee or CASAC. We are most fortunate to have before us the three past chairman of the Clean Air Science Advisory Committee, and its current chairman to enlighten us on these findings.

I hope, gentleman, that your testimony today can clear up some very substantial questions that still remain regarding the scientific underlying EPA's proposal. For instance, The Administrator has stated that science directs us to an ozone standard of 80 parts per billion. But CASAC seems to have stated that the choice of a standard is not determined by the science, but is a policy choice by the Administrator.

Equal confusion exists with respect to particulate matter. CASAC appears to state that there is no definitive proof of cause and effect in relation to particulate matter and mortality, yet the Administrator has stated that we do have proof of cause and effect.

Does science lead us to what the levels of the standard should be, or is this a policy decision of the Administrator. If a policy decision, what are the conclusions upon which this policy decision is being made. These are the ones we hope to resolve today.